

Do Not Worry 5-19-13

In America we speak a lot about rights. It would not be invalid to use similar language to describe our place in the Kingdom (Galatians 5:13). Do we have the right to worry about the church? Specifically, things such as size or membership? Today we see that we have no right to worry. Our key passage is I Corinthians 3, where Paul reminds the Corinthians that God is working with them in the labor of the local church. For us, we need to consider this; with people having recently moved, there is concern about the state of our church. Is this concern a good thing?

Let us begin by identifying our present worries. We are not growing fast enough seems to be common, with the associated cause being too many members are moving. What will happen to our group in time?

First, we need to remember why it is that the church will not fail. First, because it is established on the Word, the church will necessarily exist until the end of time. I Peter 1:23-25 tells us that the Word will remain, and I Timothy 3:15 speaks to the foundation of the church in the Word (another more detailed idea is in Ephesians 4). If the root of the church will never die, the church will remain. Second, the church is the result of the Gospel satisfying a specific need. That need, sin, remains constant (Romans 3:9-18). This makes clear why the universal church will never fail; but a local church can. So what about a local congregation?

Even here, we are not to worry. First, we need to remember that we are commanded not to worry (Matthew 6:25-27). Worry is often a sign of our making dire predictions of the future. We are told that this is a sin (James 4:13-16). We cannot know what will happen in the future.

Let us change gears for a second and consider that perhaps our worry is because we are not looking at the church in the right manner. Too often we see the church in the way some see a corporation. Is that the model of the church that Jesus built? Let us make a comparison: the corporate church format the world presents, or a more primitive model as in a support group (our example here is Alcoholics Anonymous). Which one reflects the local congregation of the first century? AA does not worry about membership ten years from now; it is only focused on getting members through the moment. A *Corporation Church* is more concerned with the church as a separate entity from the members. It worries about things as much as 5 or 10 years off. It seeks to ensure its survivability by any means. AA is a collective with a single purpose. Which one reflects the local congregation?

Now for the real danger. Occupying our minds with things we should NOT worry about prevents us from occupying our minds with the things to which we ought to pay attention. That begs the question: What Does Kill the Church? According to Scriptures, if a congregation is not dedicated to doctrinal purity, it will die (Revelation 2-3). If it is not dedicated to personal work (meaning love of brethren – I John 3:16-20 – and love of the lost – Matthew 9:36-38), it will die. These real dangers are overlooked when we miss the mark and focus on the wrong things

Therefore, do not worry about when members move away or we do not see growth that we would want. Such things the corporate churches of the world worry about. Instead, let us focus on the here and now and seek first the kingdom. Today has enough troubles of its own for us to work on.

